

[From *Household Words*.]

FRANCIS JEFFREY.

JEFFREY was a year younger than SCOTT, whom he outlived eighteen years, and with whose career his own had some points of resemblance. They came of the same middle-class stock, and had played together as lads in the High School "yard" before they met as advocates in the Court of Session. The fathers of both were connected with that court; and from childhood, both were devoted to the law. But Scott's boyish infirmity imprisoned him in Edinburgh, while Jeffrey was let loose to Glasgow University, and afterward passed up to Queen's College, Oxford. The boys, thus separated, had no remembrance of having previously met, when they saw each other at the Speculative Society in 1791.

The Oxford of that day suited Jeffrey ill. It suited few people well who cared for any thing but cards and claret. Southey, who came just after him, tells us that the Greek he took there he left there, nor ever passed such unprofitable months; and Lord Malmesbury, who had been there but a little time before him, wonders how it was that so many men should make their way in the world creditably, after leaving a place that taught nothing but idleness and drunkenness. But Jeffrey was not long exposed to its temptations. He left after the brief residence of a single term; and what in after life he remembered most vividly in connection with it, seems to have been the twelve days' hard traveling between Edinburgh and London, which preceded his entrance at Queen's. Some seventy years before, another Scotch lad, on his way to become yet more famous in literature and law, had taken nearly as many weeks to perform the same journey; but, between the schooldays of Mansfield and of Jeffrey, the world had not been resting.

It was enacting its greatest modern incident, the first French Revolution, when the young Scotch student returned to Edinburgh and changed his College gown for that of the advocate. Scott had the start of him in the Court of Session by two years, and had become rather active and distinguished in the Speculative Society before Jeffrey joined it. When the latter, then a lad of nineteen, was introduced (one evening in 1791), he observed a heavy-looking young man officiating as secretary, who sat solemnly at the bottom of the table in a huge woolen night-cap, and who, before the business of the night began, rose from his chair, and, with imperturbable gravity seated on as much of his face as was discernible from the wrappings of the "portentous machine" that enveloped it, apologized for having left home with a bad toothache. This was his quondam schoolfellow Scott. Perhaps Jeffrey was pleased with the mingled enthusiasm for the speculative, and regard for the practical, implied in the woolen nightcap; or perhaps he was interested by the *Essay on Ballads* which the hero of the

nightcap read in the course of the evening: but before he left the meeting he sought an introduction to Mr. Walter Scott, and they were very intimate for many years afterward.

The Speculative Society dealt with the usual subjects of elocution and debate prevalent in similar places then and since; such as, whether there ought to be an Established Religion, and whether the Execution of Charles I. was justifiable, and if Ossian's poems were authentic? It was not a fraternity of speculators by any means of an alarming or dangerous sort. John Allen and his friends, at this very time, were spouting forth active sympathy for French Republicanism at Fortune's Tavern, under immediate and watchful superintendence of the Police; James Mackintosh was parading the streets with Horne Tooke's colors in his hat; James Montgomery was expiating in York jail his exulting ballad on the fall of the Bastile; and Southey and Coleridge, in despair of old England, had completed the arrangements of their youthful colony for a community of property, and proscription of every thing selfish, on the banks of the Susquehanna; but the speculative orators rarely probed the sores of the body politic deeper than an inquiry into the practical advantages of belief in a future state? and whether it was for the interest of Britain to maintain the balance of Europe? or if knowledge could be too much disseminated among the lower ranks of the people?

In short, nothing of the extravagance of the time, on either side, is associable with the outset of Jeffrey's career. As little does he seem to have been influenced, on the one hand, by the democratic foray of some two hundred convention delegates into Edinburgh in 1792, as, on the other, by the prominence of his father's name to a protest of frantic high-tory defiance; and he was justified, not many years since, in referring with pride to the fact that, at the opening of his public life, his view of the character of the first French revolution, and of its probable influence on other countries, had been such as to require little modification during the whole of his subsequent career. The precision and accuracy of his judgment had begun to show itself thus early. At the crude young Jacobins, so soon to ripen into Quarterly Reviewers, who were just now coqueting with Mary Woolstonecraft, or making love to the ghost of Madame Roland, or branding as worthy of the bowstring the tyrannical enormities of Mr. Pitt, he could afford to laugh from the first. From the very first he had the strongest liberal tendencies, but restrained them so wisely that he could cultivate them well.

He joined the band of youths who then sat at the feet of Dugald Stewart, and whose first incentive to distinction in the more difficult paths of knowledge, as well as their almost universal adoption of the liberal school of politics, are in some degree attributable to the teaching of that distinguished man. Among them were Brougham and Horner, who had played together from boyhood in Edinburgh streets, had joined the

Speculative on the same evening six years after Jeffrey (who in Brougham soon found a sharp opponent on colonial and other matters), and were still fast friends. Jeffrey's father, raised to a deputy clerk of session, now lived on a third or fourth flat in Buchanan's Court in the Lawn Market, where the worthy old gentleman kept two women servants and a man at livery; but where the furniture does not seem to have been of the soundest. This fact his son used to illustrate by an anecdote of the old gentleman eagerly setting-to at a favorite dinner one day, with the two corners of the table cloth tied round his neck to protect his immense professional frills, when the leg of his chair gave way, and he tumbled back on the floor with all the dishes, sauces, and viands a-top of him. Father and son lived here together, till the latter took for his first wife the daughter of the Professor of Hebrew in the University of St. Andrew, and moved to an upper story in another part of town. He had been called to the bar in 1794, and was married eight years afterward. He had not meanwhile obtained much practice, and the elevation implied in removal to an upper flat is not of the kind that a young Benedict covets. But distinction of another kind was at length at hand.

One day early in 1802, "in the eighth or ninth story or flat in Buccleugh Place, the elevated residence of the then Mr. Jeffrey," Mr. Jeffrey had received a visit from Horner and Sydney Smith, when Sydney, at this time a young English curate temporarily resident in Edinburgh, preaching, teaching, and joking with a flow of wit, humanity, and sense that fascinated every body, started the notion of the Edinburgh Review. The two Scotchmen at once voted the Englishman its editor, and the notion was communicated to John Archibald Murray (Lord Advocate after Jeffrey, long years afterward), John Allen (then lecturing on medical subjects at the University, but who went abroad before he could render any essential service), and Alexander Hamilton (afterward Sanscrit professor at Haileybury). This was the first council; but it was extended, after a few days, till the two Thomsons (John and Thomas, the physician and the advocate), Thomas Brown (who succeeded to Dugald Stewart's chair), and Henry Brougham, were admitted to the deliberations. Horner's quondam playfellow was an ally too potent to be obtained without trouble; and, even thus early, had not a few characteristics in common with the Roman statesman and orator whom it was his greatest ambition in after life to resemble, and of whom Shakspeare has told us that he never followed any thing that other men began.

"You remember how cheerfully Brougham approved of our plan at first," wrote Jeffrey to Horner, in April, in the thick of anxious preparations for the start, "and agreed to give us an article or two without hesitation. Three or four days ago I proposed two or three books that I thought would suit him; when he answered, with perfect good humor, that he had

changed his view of our plan a little, and rather thought now that he should decline to have any connection with it." This little coquetry was nevertheless overcome; and before the next six months were over, Brougham had become an efficient and zealous member of the band.

It is curious to see how the project hung fire at first. Jeffrey had nearly finished four articles, Horner had partly written four, and more than half the number was printed; and yet well-nigh the other half had still to be written. The memorable fasciculus at last appeared in November, after a somewhat tedious gestation of nearly ten months; having been subject to what Jeffrey calls so "miserable a state of backwardness" and so many "symptoms of despondency," that Constable had to delay the publication some weeks beyond the day first fixed. Yet as early as April had Sydney Smith completed more than half of what he contributed, while nobody else had put pen to paper; and shortly after the number appeared, he was probably not sorry to be summoned, with his easy pen and his cheerful wit, to London, and to abandon the cares of editorship to Jeffrey.

No other choice could have been made. That first number settled the point. It is easy to discover that Jeffrey's estimation in Edinburgh had not, up to this time, been in any just proportion to his powers; and that, even with those who knew him best, his playful and sportive fancy sparkled too much to the surface of his talk to let them see the grave, deep currents that ran underneath. Every one now read with surprise the articles attributed to him. Sydney had yielded him the place of honor, and he had vindicated his right to it. He had thrown out a new and forcible style of criticism, with a fearless, unmisgiving, and unhesitating courage. Objectors might doubt or cavil at the opinions expressed; but the various and comprehensive knowledge, the subtle, argumentative genius, the brilliant and definite expression, there was no disputing or denying. A fresh and startling power was about to make itself felt in literature.

"Jeffrey," said his most generous fellow laborer, a few days after the Review appeared, "is the person who will derive most honor from this publication, as his articles in this number are generally known, and are incomparably the best; I have received the greater pleasure from this circumstance, because the genius of that little man has remained almost unknown to all but his most intimate acquaintances. His manner is not at first pleasing; what is worse, it is of that cast which almost irresistibly impresses upon strangers the idea of levity and superficial talents. Yet there is not any man, whose real character is so much the reverse; he has, indeed, a very sportive and playful fancy, but it is accompanied with an extensive and varied information, with a readiness of apprehension almost intuitive, with judicious and calm discernment, with a profound and penetrating understanding." This confident passage from a private journal of the 20th November, 1802, may stand as a re-

markable monument of the prescience of Francis Horner.

Yet it was also the opinion of this candid and sagacious man that he and his fellows had not gained much character by that first number of the Review. As a set-off to the talents exhibited, he spoke of the severity—of what, in some of the papers, might be called the scurrility—as having given general dissatisfaction; and he predicted that they would have to soften their tone, and be more indulgent to folly and bad taste. Perhaps it is hardly thus that the objection should have been expressed. It is now, after the lapse of nearly half a century, admitted on all hands that the tone adopted by these young Edinburgh reviewers was in some respects extremely indiscreet; and that it was not simply folly and bad taste, but originality and genius, that had the right to more indulgence at their hands. When Lord Jeffrey lately collected Mr. Jeffrey's critical articles, he silently dropped those very specimens of his power which by their boldness of view, severity of remark, and vivacity of expression, would still as of old have attracted the greatest notice; and preferred to connect with his name, in the regard of such as might hereafter take interest in his writings, only those papers which, by enforcing what appeared to him just principles and useful opinions, he hoped might have a tendency to make men happier and better. Somebody said by way of compliment of the early days of the Scotch Review, that it made reviewing more respectable than authorship; and the remark, though essentially the reverse of a compliment, exhibits with tolerable accuracy the general design of the work at its outset. Its ardent young reviewers took a somewhat too ambitious stand above the literature they criticised. "To all of us," Horner ingenuously confessed, "it is only matter of temporary amusement and subordinate occupation."

Something of the same notion was in Scott's thoughts when, smarting from a severe but not unjust or ungenerous review of *Marmion*, he said that Jeffrey loved to see imagination best when it is bitted and managed, and ridden upon the *grand pas*. He did not make sufficient allowance for starts and sallies and bounds, when *Pegasus* was beautiful to behold, though sometimes perilous to his rider. He would have had control of horse as well as rider, Scott complained, and made himself master of the ménage to both. But on the other hand this was often very possible; and nothing could then be conceived more charming than the earnest, playful, delightful way in which his comments adorned and enriched the poets he admired. Hogarth is not happier in Charles Lamb's company, than is the homely vigor and genius of *Crabbe* under Jeffrey's friendly leading; he returned fancy for fancy to *Moore's* exuberance, and sparkled with a wit as keen; he "tamed his wild heart" to the loving thoughtfulness of *Rogers*, his scholarly enthusiasm, his pure and vivid pictures; with the fiery energy and passionate exuberance of

Byron, his bright, courageous spirit broke into earnest sympathy; for the clear and stirring strains of *Campbell* he had an ever lively and liberal response; and *Scott*, in the midst of many temptations to the exercise of severity never ceased to awaken the romance and generosity of his nature.

His own idea of the more grave critical claims put forth by him in his early days, found expression in later life. He had constantly endeavored, he said, to combine ethical precepts with literary criticism. He had earnestly sought to impress his readers with a sense, both of the close connection between sound intellectual attainments, and the higher elements of duty and enjoyment; and of the just and ultimate subordination of the former to the latter. Nor without good reason did he take this praise to himself. The taste which *Dugald Stewart* had implanted in him, governed him more than any other at the outset of his career; and may often have contributed not a little, though quite unconsciously, to lift the aspiring young metaphysician somewhat too ambitiously above the level of the luckless author summoned to his judgment seat. Before the third year of the review had opened, he had broken a spear in the lists of metaphysical philosophy even with his old tutor, and with *Jeremy Bentham*, both in the maturity of their fame; he had assailed, with equal gallantry, the opposite errors of *Priestley* and *Reid*; and, not many years later, he invited his friend *Alison* to a friendly contest, from which the fancies of that amiable man came out dulled by a superior brightness, by more lively, varied, and animated conceptions of beauty, and by a style which recommended a more than Scotch soberness of doctrine with a more than French vivacity of expression.

For it is to be said of Jeffrey, that when he opposed himself to enthusiasm, he did so in the spirit of an enthusiast; and that this had a tendency to correct such critical mistakes as he may occasionally have committed. And as of him, so of his Review. In professing to go deeply into the *principles* on which its judgments were to be rested, as well as to take large and original views of all the important questions to which those works might relate—it substantially succeeded, as Jeffrey presumed to think it had done, in familiarizing the public mind with higher speculations, and sounder and larger views of the great objects of human pursuit; as well as in permanently raising the standard, and increasing the influence, of all such occasional writings far beyond the limits of Great Britain.

Nor let it be forgotten that the system on which Jeffrey established relations between his writers and publishers has been of the highest value as a precedent in such matters, and has protected the independence and dignity of a later race of reviewers. He would never receive an unpaid-for contribution. He declined to make it the interest of the proprietors to prefer a certain class of contributors. The payment was ten guineas a sheet at first, and rose gradually to double that sum, with increase

on special occasions; and even when rank or other circumstances made remuneration a matter of perfect indifference, Jeffrey insisted that it should nevertheless be received. The Czar Peter, when working in the trenches, he was wont to say, received pay as a common soldier. Another principle which he rigidly carried out, was that of a thorough independence of publishing interests. The Edinburgh Review was never made in any manner tributary to particular bookselling schemes. It assailed or supported with equal vehemence or heartiness the productions of Albemarle-street and Paternoster-row. "I never asked such a thing of him but once," said the late Mr. Constable, describing an attempt to obtain a favorable notice from his obdurate editor, "and I assure you the result was no encouragement to repeat such petitions." The book was Scott's edition of Swift; and the result one of the bitterest attacks on the popularity of Swift, in one of Jeffrey's most masterly criticisms.

He was the better able thus to carry his point, because against more potent influences he had already taken a decisive stand. It was not till six years after the Review was started that Scott remonstrated with Jeffrey on the virulence of its party politics. But much earlier even than this, the principal proprietors had made the same complaint; had pushed their objections to the contemplation of Jeffrey's surrender of the editorship; and had opened negotiations with writers known to be bitterly opposed to him. To his honor, Southey declined these overtures, and advised a compromise of the dispute. Some of the leading Whigs themselves were discontented, and Horner had appealed to him from the library of Holland House. Nevertheless, Jeffrey stood firm. He carried the day against Paternoster-row, and unassailably established the all-important principle of a perfect independence of his publishers' control. He stood as resolute against his friend Scott; protesting that on one leg, and the weakest, the Review could not and should not stand, for that its *right leg* he knew to be politics. To Horner he replied, by carrying the war into the Holland House country with inimitable spirit and cogency. "Do, for Heaven's sake, let your Whigs do something popular and effective this session. Don't you see the nation is now divided into two, and only two parties; and that *between* these stand the Whigs, utterly inefficient, and incapable of ever becoming efficient, if they will still maintain themselves at an equal distance from both. You must lay aside a great part of your aristocratic feelings, and side with the most respectable and sane of the democrats."

The vigorous wisdom of the advice was amply proved by subsequent events, and its courage nobody will doubt who knows any thing of what Scotland was at the time. In office, if not in intellect, the Tories were supreme. A single one of the Dundases named the sixteen Scots peers, and forty-three of the Scots commoners; nor was it an impossible farce, that the sheriff

of a county should be the only freeholder present at the election of a member to represent it in Parliament, should as freeholder vote himself chairman, should as chairman receive the oaths and the writ for himself as sheriff, should as chairman and sheriff sign them, should propose himself as candidate, declare himself elected, dictate and sign the minutes of election, make the necessary indenture between the various parties represented solely by himself, transmit it to the Crown-office, and take his seat by the same night's mail to vote with Mr. Addington! We must recollect such things, when we would really understand the services of such men as Jeffrey. We must remember the evil and injustice he so strenuously labored to remove, and the cost at which his labor was given. We must bear in mind that he had to face day by day, in the exercise of his profession, the very men most interested in the abuses actively assailed, and keenly resolved, as far as possible, to disturb and discredit their assailant. "Oh, Mr. Smith," said Lord Stowell to Sydney, "you would have been a much richer man if you had come over to us!" This was in effect the sort of thing said to Jeffrey daily in the Court of Session, and disregarded with generous scorn. What it is to an advocate to be on the deaf side of "the ear of the Court," none but an advocate can know; and this, with Jeffrey, was the twenty-five years' penalty imposed upon him for desiring to see the Catholics emancipated, the consciences of dissenters relieved, the barbarism of jurisprudence mitigated, and the trade in human souls abolished.

The Scotch Tories died hard. Worsted in fair fight they resorted to foul; and among the publications avowedly established for personal slander of their adversaries, a pre-eminence so infamous was obtained by the Beacon, that it disgraced the cause irretrievably. Against this malignant libeler Jeffrey rose in the Court of Session again and again, and the result of its last prosecution showed the power of the party represented by it thoroughly broken. The successful advocate, at length triumphant even in that Court over the memory of his talents and virtues elsewhere, had now forced himself into the front rank of his profession; and they who listened to his advocacy found it even more marvelous than his criticism, for power, versatility, and variety. Such rapidity yet precision of thought, such volubility yet clearness of utterance, left all competitors behind. Hardly any subject could be so indifferent or uninviting, that this teeming and fertile intellect did not surround it with a thousand graces of allusion, illustration, and fanciful expression. He might have suggested Butler's hero,

"—who could not ope

His mouth but out there flew a trope,"

with the difference that each trope flew to its proper mark, each fancy found its place in the dazzling profusion, and he could at all times, with a charming and instinctive ease, put the nicest restraints and checks on his glowing

velocity of declamation. A worthy Glasgow baillie, smarting under an adverse verdict obtained by these facilities of speech, could find nothing so bitter to advance against the speaker as a calculation made with the help of Johnson's Dictionary, to the effect that Mr. Jeffrey, in the course of a few hours, had spoken the whole English language twice over!

But the Glasgow baillie made little impression on his fellow citizens; and from Glasgow came the first public tribute to Jeffrey's now achieved position, and legal as well as literary fame. He was elected Lord Rector of the University in 1821 and 1822. Some seven or eight years previously he had married the accomplished lady who survives him, a grand-niece of the celebrated Wilkes; and had purchased the lease of the villa near Edinburgh which he occupied to the time of his death, and whose romantic woods and grounds will long be associated with his name. At each step of his career a new distinction now awaited him, and with every new occasion his unflagging energies seemed to rise and expand. He never wrote with such masterly success for his Review as when his whole time appeared to be occupied with criminal prosecutions, with contested elections, with journeyings from place to place, with examinations and cross-examinations, with speeches, addresses, exhortations, denunciations. In all conditions and on all occasions, a very atmosphere of activity was around him. Even as he sat, apparently still, waiting to address a jury or amaze a witness, it made a slow man nervous to look at him. Such a flush of energy vibrated through that delicate frame, such rapid and never ceasing thought played on those thin lips, such restless flashes of light broke from those kindling eyes. You continued to look at him, till his very silence acted as a spell; and it ceased to be difficult to associate with his small but well-knit figure even the giant-like labors and exertions of this part of his astonishing career.

At length, in 1829, he was elected Dean of the Faculty of Advocates; and thinking it unbecoming that the official head of a great law corporation should continue the editing of a party organ, he surrendered the management of the Edinburgh Review. In the year following, he took office with the Whigs as Lord Advocate, and replaced Sir James Scarlett in Lord Fitzwilliam's borough of Malton. In the next memorable year he contested his native city against a Dundas; not succeeding in his election, but dealing the last heavy blow to his opponent's sinking dynasty. Subsequently he took his seat as Member for Perth, introduced and carried the Scotch Reform bill, and in the December of 1832 was declared member for Edinburgh. He had some great sorrows at this time to check and alloy his triumphs. Probably no man had gone through a life of eager conflict and active antagonism with a heart so sensitive to the gentler emotions, and the deaths of Mackintosh and Scott affected him deeply. He had had

occasion, during the illness of the latter, to allude to him in the House of Commons; and he did this with so much beauty and delicacy, with such manly admiration of the genius and modest deference to the opinions of his great Tory friend, that Sir Robert Peel made a journey across the floor of the house to thank him cordially for it.

The House of Commons nevertheless was not his natural element, and when, in 1834, a vacancy in the Court of Session invited him to his due promotion, he gladly accepted the dignified and honorable office so nobly earned by his labors and services. He was in his sixty-second year at the time of his appointment, and he continued for nearly sixteen years the chief ornament of the Court in which he sat. In former days the judgment-seats in Scotland had not been unused to the graces of literature: but in Jeffrey these were combined with an acute and profound knowledge of law less usual in that connection; and also with such a charm of demeanor, such a play of fancy and wit sobered to the kindliest courtesies, such clear sagacity, perfect freedom from bias, consideration for all differences of opinion; and integrity, independence, and broad comprehensiveness of view in maintaining his own; that there has never been but one feeling as to his judicial career. Universal veneration and respect attended it. The speculative studies of his youth had done much to soften all the asperities of his varied and vigorous life, and now, at its close, they gave to his judgments a large reflectiveness of tone, a moral beauty of feeling, and a philosophy of charity and good taste, which have left to his successors in that Court of Session no nobler models for imitation and example. Impatience of dullness would break from him, now and then; and the still busy activity of his mind might be seen as he rose often suddenly from his seat, and paced up and down before it; but in his charges or decisions nothing of this feeling was perceptible, except that lightness and grace of expression in which his youth seemed to linger to the last, and a quick sensibility to emotion and enjoyment which half concealed the ravages of time.

If such was the public estimation of this great and amiable man, to the very termination of his useful life, what language should describe the charm of his influence in his private and domestic circle? The affectionate pride with which every citizen of Edinburgh regarded him rose here to a kind of idolatry. For here the whole man was known—his kind heart, his open hand, his genial talk, his ready sympathy, his generous encouragement and assistance to all that needed it. The first passion of his life was its last, and never was the love of literature so bright within him as at the brink of the grave. What dims and deadens the impressibility of most men, had rendered his not only more acute and fresh, but more tributary to calm satisfaction, and pure enjoyment. He did not live merely in the past, as age is wont to do, but drew delight from

every present manifestation of worth or genius, from whatever quarter it addressed him. His vivid pleasure where his interest was awakened, his alacrity and eagerness of appreciation, the fervor of his encouragement and praise, have animated the hopes and relieved the toil alike of the successful and the unsuccessful, who can not hope, through whatever checkered future may await them, to find a more generous critic, a more profound adviser, a more indulgent friend.

The present year opened upon Francis Jeffrey with all hopeful promise. He had mastered a severe illness, and resumed his duties with his accustomed cheerfulness; private circumstances had more than ordinarily interested him in his old Review; and the memory of past friends, giving yet greater strength to the affection that surrounded him, was busy at his heart. "God bless you!" he wrote to Sydney Smith's widow on the night of the 18th of January; "I am very old, and have many infirmities; but I am tenacious of old friendships, and find much of my present enjoyments in the recollections of the past." He sat in Court the next day, and on the Monday and Tuesday of the following week, with his faculties and attention unimpaired. On the Wednesday he had a slight attack of bronchitis; on Friday, symptoms of danger appeared; and on Saturday he died, peacefully and without pain. Few men had completed with such consummate success the work appointed them in this world; few men had passed away to a better with more assured hopes of their reward. The recollection of his virtues sanctifies his fame; and his genius will never cease to awaken the gratitude, respect, and pride of his countrymen.

HAIL AND FAREWELL!